IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A printed circuit board comprising:

a substrate,

a plurality of electronic components, ~~and~~

a pattern of metal tracks ~~(1)~~ on said substrate for connecting said electronic components, said metal tracks ~~(1)~~ being covered with a protective non-conductive layer, ~~wherein said board further comprises~~

a fuse, said fuse comprising a narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ within the pattern, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ is uncovered such that it is exposed to air, and wherein a slot is provided in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, said slots being located at a distance of less than 2 mm from the narrowed metal track.

2.(Currently Amended) The printed circuit board according to claim 1, wherein ~~further~~ an area ~~(4)~~ of at least 0.5 mm~~, preferably at least 1 mm~~ extending from said narrowed metal track ~~(1)~~ is uncovered.

3.(Currently Amended) The printed circuit board according to claim 1, wherein ~~further~~ a distance of at least 1.5 mm~~, preferably at least 2 mm~~ of the ends ~~(6)~~ of the wider metal tracks ~~(1)~~ extending from both ends of the narrowed metal track (3) are uncovered.

4.(Currently Amended) The printed circuit board according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a width of said narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ is less than 0.3 mm~~, preferably less than 0.2 mm~~.

Claims 5-6 (Canceled)

7.(Currently Amended) ~~The printed circuit board according to claim 5,~~ A printed circuit board comprising:

a substrate,

a plurality of electronic components,

a pattern of metal tracks on said substrate for connecting said electronic components, said metal tracks being covered with a protective non-conductive layer,

a fuse, said fuse comprising a narrowed metal track within the pattern, said narrowed metal track being uncovered such that it is exposed to air, wherein a slot is provided in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, and wherein ~~the~~ an area ~~(4)~~ between the narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ and the slots ~~(5)~~ is substantially uncovered.

8.(Currently Amended) ~~The printed circuit board according to claim 5,~~ A printed circuit board comprising:

a substrate,

a plurality of electronic components,

a pattern of metal tracks on said substrate for connecting said electronic components, said metal tracks being covered with a protective non-conductive layer,

a fuse, said fuse comprising a narrowed metal track within the pattern, said narrowed metal track being uncovered such that it is exposed to air, wherein a slot is provided in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, and wherein the a width of the slots ~~(5)~~ is at least 0.5 mm~~, preferably at least 1 mm~~.

9. (Previously Presented) An electronic ballast for a gas discharge lamp comprising a printed circuit board according to claim 1.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a printed circuit board comprising the acts of:

providing on a substrate, a plurality of electronic components, and a pattern of metal tracks ~~(1)~~ on said substrate for connecting said electronic components, ~~said metal tracks (1) being covered~~

covering said metal tracks with a protective non-conductive layer, ~~wherein said board is further provided with~~

forming a fuse by providing a narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ within

the pattern, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said narrowed metal track ~~(3)~~ is not covered with a protective non-conductive layer such that ~~it~~ said narrowed metal track remains exposed to air, and

forming a slot in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, wherein said slots are located at a distance of less than 2 mm from the narrowed metal track.

11. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein an area of at least 0.5 mm extending from said narrowed metal track is uncovered.

12. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein a distance of at least 1.5 mm of the ends of the wider metal tracks extending from both ends of the narrowed metal track are uncovered.

13. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein a width of said narrowed metal track is less than 0.3 mm.

14. (New) A method for producing a printed circuit board comprising the acts of:

providing on a substrate, a plurality of electronic components, and a pattern of metal tracks on said substrate for connecting said electronic components;

covering said metal tracks with a protective non-conductive layer;

forming a fuse by providing a narrowed metal track within the pattern, wherein said narrowed metal track is not covered with a protective non-conductive layer such that said narrowed metal track remains exposed to air; and

forming a slot in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, wherein an area between the narrowed metal track and the slots is substantially uncovered.

15. (New) A method for producing a printed circuit board comprising the acts of:

providing on a substrate, a plurality of electronic components, and a pattern of metal tracks on said substrate for connecting said electronic components;

covering said metal tracks with a protective non-conductive

layer;

forming a fuse by providing a narrowed metal track within the pattern, wherein said narrowed metal track is not covered with a protective non-conductive layer such that said narrowed metal track remains exposed to air; and

forming a slot in the substrate alongside substantially an entire length of the narrowed metal track at both sides thereof, wherein a width of the slots is at least 0.5 mm.